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ABSTRACT

The current situation in Great Britain regarding equal opportunities for pupils learning second languages is examined. Focus is on race, class, and gender, with consideration also given to issues of pupils with disabilities. The report includes five chapters that include possible teaching strategies and points for departmental discussion. The chapters are as follows: (1) Using Existing Resources (presenting and practicing new language and producing the language); (2) What We Teach--Rethinking Tasks in the Syllabus (creating topics and tasks, choosing the linguistic exponents, and expressing opinions); (3) How We Teach--Managing Classroom Interaction and Groupings (classroom interaction and group work); (4) Exploring Language; and (5) Getting the Message Across--The Contribution of the Languages Department to Equal Opportunities in the School (raising awareness and cross-curricular collaboration). It is concluded that teachers should routinely build into their lessons different ways of looking at the world. A list of selected reading materials (19 citations) is appended. (LB)

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Pathfinder

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A CILT series for language teachers

Fair enough?

Equal opportunities and modern languages

Vee Harris

Illustrations by Sophie Harris

CiLT

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Introduction

The phrase 'equal opportunities' has been with us for some time now, to the point indeed that it may almost sound 'old hat'! Yet, in spite of the strenuous efforts that have been made to ensure that each child achieves its potential, we know that:

- working class pupils are still less likely to go on to university than their middle and upper class peers;
- the school curriculum continues to play its part in preparing the sexes for very different roles in adult life;
- pupils' ethnic backgrounds still make a significant difference in terms of their success or failure at school.

Clearly then, there are no instant solutions to building an education system which is 'fair enough'. It is not even very easy to identify what we should be doing, given that the whole area is the source of considerable debate. Indeed, as a reader you may already be thinking 'yes, but ... ':

- Yes, but given that so much in society is a powerful force in shaping pupils' aspirations for themselves, from the media to parental attitudes, what can we possibly do in a modern language lesson that will make a difference? The report of the National Curriculum Working Group (*Modern foreign languages for ages 11 to 16*; October 1990) may well spell out the wide range of possibilities which our subject offers - most obviously in chapter 14 dealing specifically with equal opportunities, but how do we take up their proposals within the limited resources currently available in schools?
- Yes, but how do you define equal opportunities anyway? Should it take account of all aspects of prejudice, including weight and wearing glasses? Or does such a broad sweep serve to hide or trivialise the way the school curriculum contributes to the distribution of life chances by virtue of race, gender or class?
- Yes, but do we allow girls to sit in a group together so that they are not dominated by the boys or do we insist from the start that boys and girls learn to work together?

- Yes, but if I deliberately order a new German coursebook that includes pictures of Turkish teenagers, is it no more than a token gesture that does not really help pupils address the real issues of the unequal distribution of power and status in our society?

In the end, each of us has to weigh up the arguments, reach our own decisions and do the best we can within our own situations.

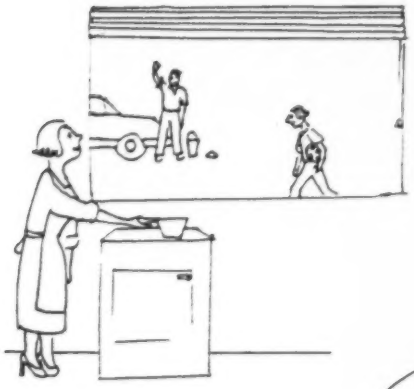
The purpose of this book is not to try to deal with these complex arguments in depth. I hope simply to open up for discussion some of the issues raised and to spell out in concrete terms some practical suggestions for ways in which we can try to answer the question 'what can I do about equal opportunities in my language lessons?'

I set out to present as fair and balanced a view as I could of the current situation and of questions relating to equal opportunities. I took the decision to focus on race, class and gender and to include issues of pupils with disabilities where I could, though I realise that this leaves a great deal more work to be done. I was aware from the outset that the area of equal opportunities is a sensitive one. Few people would want to describe themselves as racist or sexist. What is more, for most of us, learning about what equal opportunities might mean in principle and practice is not painless. Despite all our efforts, the ways in which we come to know and understand the world inevitably proceed from our own position in it. I have consulted a small group of people who are on the inside of oppressions in ways that I am not, but the mistakes that remain are my own. I hope that it will be read in the spirit in which it was intended - to provide a small and practical step forward in a complex and important area.

1. Using existing resources

If pupils are to believe some of the textbooks they use in their modern language lessons ...

★ ... a typical mum cooks a lavish meal in the kitchen, while dad repairs the car/plays golf;



- Où est maman?
- Elle est dans la cuisine.
  Elle fait la cuisine.
- Où est Pierre?
  Il est dans le jardin.
  Il joue au football.
- Et papa, où est-il?
  Il est dans le garage.
  Il répare la voiture.

★ ... a typical home is at least semi-detached with a minimum of three bedrooms;

★ ... a typical holiday consists of driving the family car to a three star hotel in a luxury resort.

But do these images really reflect the lives and experiences of many of our pupils, or indeed the lives and experiences of the friends we have made in Germany, France or Spain? Does everyone really come from a white, heterosexual, nuclear, middle-class family, with large comfortable houses and regular holidays abroad? Do most women stay at home, while their husbands go out to work? Most of us have struggled with pupils' hostility to anything 'foreign', but does some of their xenophobia stem from the way that the tidy, polite lives of the characters in their

textbooks bear little or no resemblance to their own? Are they more likely to identify with the young people in this illustration and want to find out more about them?

Source: *Arc en ciel*

No-one would argue that it is wrong to show a woman washing up or a family on holiday abroad. The problem arises if these are the only images we show. As language teachers, we have to rely heavily on pictures to convey our meanings.

Yet what are the implications of this analysis of the illustrations in nine commonly used textbooks below?

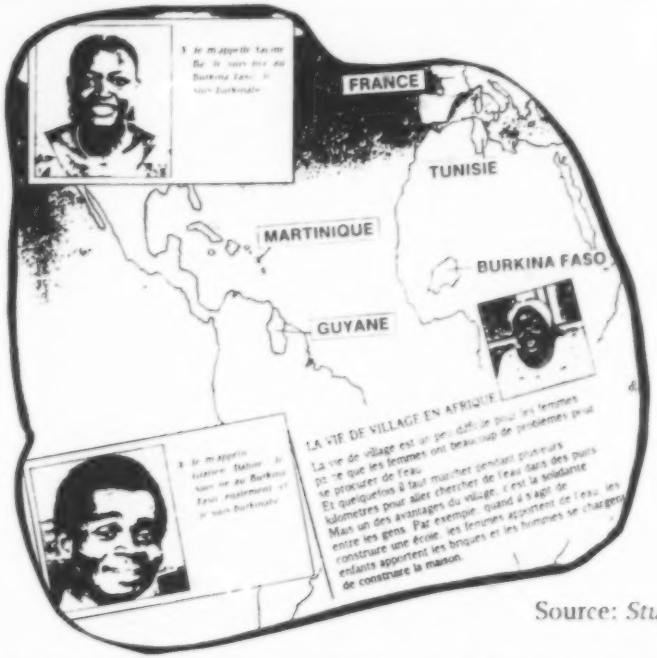
It is noticeable that there are considerably fewer pictures of women than men, and hardly any pictures of people from ethnic minorities. Furthermore, where women are shown, the image of them is often distorted - they are preoccupied with their figures and clothes, and both sexes are often in stereotypical jobs.

Materials	*Claro 1-6* 1980		*Tricolore 1* 1981		*Tricolore 2* 1981		*Tricolore 3* 1982		*D'Accord* 1982	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Visibility headcount	463	505	76	69	357	766	88	102	271	300
No. of pictures of ethnic minorities	2	10	0	0	8	6	5	6	0	0
Doctor	0	0	0	0	2	5	0	1	0	0
Nurse	0	0	0	0	5	0	1	0	0	0
Police officer	0	0	0	0	0	17	0	8	0	0

Materials	*Eclair 7-12* 1976		*Biberswald* 1973		*Hexagon* 1983		*Deutsch Konkret* 1983		Totals	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Visibility headcount	394	615	77	74	453	485	127	195	2306	3111
No. of pictures of ethnic minorities	6	4	0	0	33	25	0	3	54	54
Doctor	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	6
Nurse	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0
Police officer	0	13	0	0	0	8	0	1	0	47

Source: *ILEA equal opportunities guidelines for teachers of languages*

Similarly, authentic reading and listening material can suggest that whereas boys enjoy playing football and fishing, girls prefer to stay at home and read. This rather unbalanced view is also evident in the way material is mostly drawn directly from France or Spain, ignoring the Francophone countries of Africa, for example, or South America. In contrast, pictures like those from *Studio 16* give out very different messages from the narrow, laundered world of the traditional textbook.



Source: *Studio 16*

Turning to class, there can be a similar problem where illustrations suggest that most pupils will have their own bedroom, complete with personal stereo, and their parents have their own car. If working class lives are portrayed at all, it is often through a rather comical, lazy father surrounded by hordes of screaming children.

This kind of exclusion or distortion either through visual images or type of authentic reading and listening material not only alienates many of our pupils since it fails to reflect their own experiences, it may also contribute to national stereotyping where, at its worst, French culture is reduced to a frog and German to a sausage.

How then can we expect our pupils to:

> *identify with the experiences and perspectives of people in the countries and communities where the target language is spoken?*
>
> (National Curriculum Working Group report 6.12)

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Perhaps it would help if they could see that just as our own society contains a variety of class, language and cultural backgrounds, so the EC communities contain diverse accent and dialect groups (Basque, Friesian and Breton) and diverse language groups (Arabic, Vietnamese and Turkish speakers). If we can challenge the over-simplification inherent in stereotyping, whether at home or abroad, perhaps language learning can provide a positive counterbalance to the *'Up yours, Delors'* attitude.

Although recent textbooks have started to portray a much more balanced view of society, lack of funding means that many of us are still obliged to use the older courses. What can be done?

Possible strategies

PRESENTING AND PRACTISING NEW LANGUAGE

- We can produce more positive images by making our own flashcards or overhead transparencies to counterbalance those in the textbook, giving some of the characters names from ethnic minority languages.

Source: *Copyart*

Source: *Giara unvani*

Remember, though, when drawing pictures in order to include ethnic minorities, to avoid using stereotypical features. Neither is a black face the same as a white one, shaded in. For those of us who find drawing difficult, the ILEA publication *Copyart*, now published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, contains a wealth of useful pictures, organised under topic headings like 'jobs', 'sports', etc.

Alternatively, one PGCE student, working in a multi-ethnic school, asked the pupils to make the flashcards for the next week and they gave her pictures of a variety of ethnic minorities.

- When photocopying material, check to see whether the judicious use of some tippex and a pen might allow you to alter the images, so that for once Dad is doing the cooking or the daughter is climbing trees.

- In a listening or reading passage, we can tell pupils in advance that the boys and girls have stereotypical hobbies, and ask what they expect the various characters to say. They can then compare that to what is actually said.

- Where we have to use images in the textbook, try inviting pupils to comment using quite simple language: *Toutes les femmes sont comme ça? Eso es racista? Ist das typisch?*

- Where there is an obvious national stereotype, how about discussing images of the typical Brit, beer in hand, devoted to the royal family and never without an umbrella? Contrast that with the range of ways of life exemplified in situation comedies on TV.

- Include authentic material from other Francophone and Spanish-speaking countries. The example below was obtained on holiday in Tunisia and fits neatly into the GCSE topic 'Accommodation'.

Appart-hôtel Myriam - Sousse **

Le Myriam est à l'entrée de la ville de Sousse, et à 900 M de la plage vous offre

- Logement et petit déjeuner
- Appartement meublé climatisé, téléphone télévision, kitchinette complète, salle de bain
- Restaurant à la carte spécialité tunisienne et française
- Cafeteria
- Parking - Sclarium
- Mini-bus assure la navette à la plage et au centre ville.

نزل مريـــم - سوسة **

نزل مريم على مدخل سوسة ان كنت قادما من العاصمة وعلى بعد 900 م من الشاطىء يقدم لكم الخدمات الرقية :

- اقامة و افطار الصباح
- شقق مفروشة - هواء مكيف - هاتف - تلفزيون و مطبخ مجهز و بيت حمام
- مطعم وله اختصاصات تونسية و فرنسية
- كفاتريا - سطح للشمس
- مكان مخصص للسيارات
- حافلة ترط النزل بالشاطىء و وسط المدينة

- I have found that one problem with materials from the appropriate tourist offices in Mauritius, the Ivory Coast, etc is that they often show white tourists walking on sunny beaches, so this needs to be discussed with pupils.

- Groups such as *die Grünen* in Germany or *S.O.S Racisme* in France often have useful material.

- Can our assistants be included more effectively, by building up a bank of listening material with different accents and dialects? As well as foraging for authentic reading material on holiday, we can try also to make tape-recordings of local native speakers.

- We can include material about the other ethnic groups living in France, Germany or Spain. Listening to the feelings of a Turkish *Gastarbeiter* can in itself lead to a discussion of equal opportunities.

Menschen in Osnabrück

Ali T., türkisch, 14. Ich bin hier in O. geboren. Meine Eltern wohnen schon 16 Jahre hier. Ich habe nur wenige deutsche Freunde.

Source: *Zickzack*

PRODUCING THE LANGUAGE

- Ask pupils to rewrite passages in textbooks so that, for example:

  ★ the man is doing the washing up and the woman mending the car (this can often be a useful linguistic activity involving changing the subject pronouns, adjectival and past participle agreements, etc);
  ★ the account of a mother's daily routine can be transferred into the past tense, to describe what things used to be like.

- It is easy to alter role-plays so that there is a woman manager of a hotel, restaurant, or office, or a man who caused the car accident.

Finally, the 'yes, but ...' question again - in trying to enable pupils to identify with the lives of people abroad, how do we get the balance right so that they also perceive and value the cultural differences?

Points for departmental discussion

- ☐ To what extent do your existing courses and resources reflect the lives and experiences of your pupils?
- ☐ Where the school is in a predominantly white, middle-class area, consider whether you want to extend pupils' horizons and how this might be possible.
- ☐ Order one copy of a range of resources from which the department can draw, e.g. *Arc-en-ciel, Studio 16, Hier steht's, Zickzack* etc.
- ☐ Start to build up a bank of materials, perhaps allocating across the department responsibility for different tasks - artistic members to work on images, less artistic ones to widen the range of authentic material used.
- ☐ Write to Examination Boards to challenge inappropriate material and make it clear to publishers and boards that this is not a peripheral issue.

2. What we teach - rethinking tasks in the syllabus

The trouble with my 'A' level group is they can't say what they think about pollution in English never mind in German...
I know 30 words for pad and drink, but I can't even say "I'm fed up with doing this!"
Oh no, not the restaurant again. We did it in year 8, year 9, and now we've got to do it again for G.C.S.E...

Each summer a familiar scene is acted out in countless GCSE oral exams. In spite of repeated recycling of the topics over five years, some pupils still stumble over role-plays where they must order food in a restaurant, buy railway tickets or book in at a hotel. In the general conversation section, they might be able to say what facilities are available in their town, but asked how they feel about living there, they often get no further than mumbling that they like or dislike it. For those who continue to the sixth form, the so-called gap between GCSE and 'A' level is more like a yawning chasm. Can research into language learning give us some clues as to what is going wrong?

Little, Devitt and Singleton (1989) summarise some of the findings that may indicate some possible answers. They stress the importance of being personally and actively engaged with the language. So in terms of receptive skills, the more we are involved and interested in the ideas, in the subject matter of the reading or listening text, the more likely it is to 'sink in' and to 'stick'. And in terms of productive skills, the more we are placed in situations where we urgently want to say something, the more likely we are to pull together the bits and pieces of language we have acquired, in the effort to 'make sense'. How does this idea of relevant and interesting language match up to pupils' regular diet for GCSE, where it is constantly assumed they have or will have the financial resources to make regular trips abroad? What sense do they make of a world where they are endlessly learning to shop for invisible items, to buy tickets for all sorts of obscure destinations, and to complain that the shower is not working in their en suite bathroom?

We should not be too harsh on ourselves if we do perceive a mismatch between our syllabus and their interests. When GCSE was first introduced, many

of us were excited about the relevant and practical approach it seemed to offer. It was only in retrospect that we realised that many of the tasks were based on the tourist transactional needs of the 'typical' middle-class family.

Even where pupils are encouraged to talk about themselves, as opposed to their potential tourist needs, the linguistic exponents selected often continue to reflect this middle-class bias. I still have difficulty teaching the topic hobbies, when I know neither the pupils nor their parents spend the weekend playing golf and horse-riding.

Not only are there a limited number of topics relating to pupils' personal lives, but where such topics occur the emphasis is more on pupils giving factual information about their school, home or daily routine rather than saying what they think about it. What about all the other concerns that, as young adolescents, they must have? And is it really too hard for pupils, even in the early years, to learn to say what they think? After all, *je ne suis pas d'accord* is no more difficult than *je ne suis pas anglaise* and *no es justo* does not present more problems than *no es mi boligrafo*.

The National Curriculum Working Group report has recognised the limitations of the GCSE syllabus. It stresses the importance for pupils of:

- ★ *purposeful activities on topics that interest them* (4.2);
- ★ regular opportunities to *express opinions and articulate personal feelings* (6.10);
- ★ being able to *agree targets and the means to achieve them* (6.10).

The Working Group's proposals imply abandoning the boring but comfortably familiar GCSE topics and handing over some measure of control and responsibility for the content of lessons to the pupils themselves.

Possible strategies

CREATING TOPICS AND TASKS

Drawing on pupils' own interests

- The Areas of Experience leave us considerable freedom to negotiate with pupils about what aspects of the topics they would like to discuss. Depending on their age and interests, these might include superstitions, pet hates, interpreting dreams, relationships with friends, siblings, the other sex, pollution, wildlife protection, unemployment, etc. Although not obviously relating directly to equal opportunities, these topics may well allow pupils who do not take their holidays abroad to feel that their ideas and experiences are valued and that they remain in the group who 'can do' modern languages.

- The 'yes, but ...' question arises again. What about the gap between pupils' intellectual maturity and their limited linguistic repertoire? This point is taken up later in the chapter under 'Expressing opinions' and I have included various extracts from textbooks in this chapter to try to show that the language can be 'pruned down' and kept relatively easy.

Using equal opportunities as a topic in itself

This is another useful source of ideas and indeed is part of the Programmes of Study, which include:

> *personal, teenage and social attitudes towards religion, politics (including stereotyping and equal opportunities).*
>
> (Area of Experience B)

- We can use simple collaborative writing tasks such as brainstorming to pool pupils' ideas, e.g. making a list of typically male/female jobs/sports.

  If we then invite pupils to compare the situation in Britain with the situation in the target language country, we can start to broaden their horizons. Articles from magazines can provide useful information about inequality in the target language country. Even if the material itself is too complex, the information can be presented in a simpler form (graphs, pie charts) and used for comparison and discussion. This can also help to challenge the notion of the foreigner as a stereotype discussed in Chapter 1.

- Some of our pupils' concerns and interests may well relate more directly to their own experiences of racism or sexism. Again we can make the links with the experiences of young people elsewhere and help them discuss how they feel, provided this is handled sensitively.

RACISME
Charles Acquah vient du Ghana. Il y a deux ans, il était en France. Il voyageait avec un ami. Ils allaient de Montpellier (dans le sud de la France) à Bruxelles, capitale de la Belgique. Près de la frontière belge, ils ont vécu cet incident.
Sakina a interviewé Charles pour STUDIO 16. Lisez ces phrases, puis écoutez l'interview.
Avez-vous vécu des incidents racistes?
Oui. Je me souviens d'un cas particulier qui m'a vraiment choqué.
Où étiez-vous?
Et qu'est-ce qu'ils ont fait, alors?
Et ton ami?

Source: *Studio 16*

- In developing any aspect of equal opportunities work, it is worthwhile finding out what areas have been covered in English, drama or PSE lessons, or even at primary school. Talking about an issue in their first language may well prepare the ground for tackling it in a new language and vice-versa. As in so many aspects of equal opportunities, there is a great deal of scope for cross-curricular collaboration here.

What can be gained from using such issues as the content of our lessons? As teachers of language, we should be concerned to develop pupils' general discussion skills. Raising issues of equal opportunities allows us to provide an authentic context for doing so. It also allows us to develop their social and cultural awareness, extending their perceptions and understandings of the world. Hopefully, a final benefit will be that the desire to express their opinions will improve their motivation to learn the target language. So how then can we tackle this area?

Adding a new dimension to familiar topics

Even within GCSE, there are simple ways of adding a dimension that treats pupils not as small children but as aware and intelligent young people. Often this may enliven a topic with which both we and they are utterly bored.

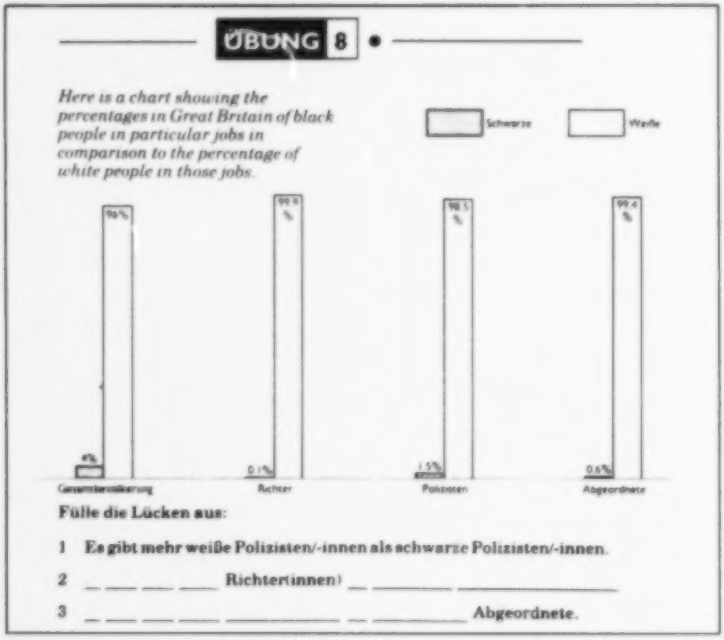
DAILY ROUTINE

Who does what in the home? How long does it take? How fair is the distribution of chores? How could they be redistributed? (This last question could be useful for the conditional tense.)

My thanks are due to Marion Carty for this example.

JOBS AND CAREERS

How does the number of black/female MP's and judges compare with the number of black/female cleaners, kitchen workers, nurses and why? (This can be useful for revising comparatives and superlatives).



Source: *Meiner Meinung nach*

HOBBIES AND SPORT

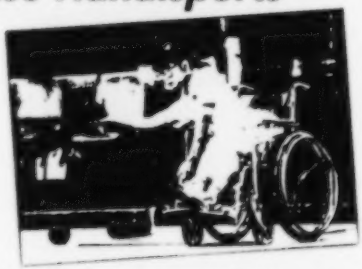
Are there traditionally female/male sports and hobbies? Is access to sports facilities sometimes determined by class through the family's financial situation? How accessible are these facilities to the disabled?

The 'yes, but ...' question again. What do we do about a word like *handicapé*? This point is taken up in Chapter 4.

La Fédération Française Handisports

1 Voici des problèmes pour les sportifs handicapés:

- le problème d'argent
- le problème d'équipements
- le problème de transport
- le problème d'égalité de chances
- le problème d'image



Quel est le problème le plus grave?

Mon opinion Ordre de gravité	**L'opinion d'un/une partenaire** Ordre de gravité
1	1 .....
2	2 .....
3	3 .....
4	4 .....
5	5 .....

Source: *Mistral*

SCHOOL

What languages are spoken by bilingual pupils in the school? Are there traditionally female/male subject preferences? Why?

TRANSPORT

What local public transport facilities are available? How clean/efficient/cheap/accessible are they?

The 'yes, but ...' question - what if the coursebook has to be rigidly followed? We can at least ask pupils to identify what they think are the most useful tasks in the unit and let them have some say in the linguistic exponents to be learned.

CHOOSING THE LINGUISTIC EXPONENTS

- Whether we or they have chosen the topic, we can invite pupils to suggest the words they will need to learn. Check that when discussing holidays, for example, they include the possibility of staying at home, going to visit a relative for the day, etc. Similarly, the items on a shopping list can include fruits and spices from outside Europe. When finding the way around a town,

or describing their own, the language offered could include words for the mosque or the temple.

- The area of family life is a sensitive one and we will want to avoid a situation where pupils feel obliged to reveal personal details. However, positive images of alternative forms of family life can be presented. Include the words for divorced, step-parents, single parent, etc.

EXPRESSING OPINIONS

- Students' ability to express their opinions is determined to some extent by their linguistic competence. Clearly, beginners are going to be more limited than advanced learners. However, all learners can be given the opportunity to express themselves, if taught the necessary language. The CILT Pathfinder *On target* contains many helpful ideas.

- Invite pupils to identify for themselves the language exponents they require so that discussion on the topic can take place. Brainstorm together the simplest ways of saying things, remind them of the vocabulary they already know and then encourage them to use dictionaries for any other words they personally want to use.

- Bear in mind that simple ways of expressing opinions and feelings ('I think that ...; I agree ...; that's too ...' etc) need to be taught just as systematically as the language of any other topic. Try including them in displays on the classroom walls.

- Although the language will often have to be kept simple in terms of what pupils can be expected to produce for themselves, don't forget that they can understand much more than they can say or write. Racist and sexist materials used in advertising, for example, can be used as the starting point for discussion. The National Curriculum Working Group report points out that 'filtering' out and 'over protection' underestimates our students' ability to think for themselves and limits their experience of cultural and social attitudes both at home and abroad (14.19). Pupils can underline words or sentences they object to, or comment on the images used in advertisements.

- Many pupils lack confidence in expressing their own ideas publicly. They may even have difficulty in establishing what it is they think in the first place. It is easy to label them as dull, uninteresting or inarticulate. Much depends, however, on what you are used to. I enjoy discussions about educational issues but would be appalled if someone asked me to give my opinion on the current controversies in football regulations at a meeting of thirty of my peers.

  Pupils then need time to understand the arguments and structures to build up their confidence. It may help to provide them first with a list of

controversial statements. Initially, they simply tick or cross each one, to indicate whether they agree or disagree. This may relieve some of the pressure of having to come up with 'instant ideas', helping them first to clarify their views and to acquire some of the language needed. Then they read the statements out, as they interview their partner. Finally, set up a situation in which each member of the group has a different role and conflicting set of opinions on their cue card. It is sometimes easier to express someone else's point of view than one's own.

Allgemein:

1 Teenager sollten ihr Taschengeld verdienen
2 Teenager sollten bei der Hausarbeit helfen
3 Teenager unter 16 Jahren sollten spätestens bis 10 Uhr im Bett sein
4 Teenager unter 15 Jahren sind zu jung, einen festen Freund/eine feste Freundin zu haben
5 Teenager sollten ihre Kleidung und ihr Aussehen selbst bestimmen
6 Heutzutage haben viele Teenager zu viel Freiheit
7 Heutzutage haben viele Teenager zu viel Geld
8 Es ist besser, ein einziges Kind zu sein, als Mitglied einer großen Familie
9 Eltern sollten sich nie vor den Kindern streiten
10 Mit 18 sollte man von zu Hause weggehen

Persönlich:

11 Ich kann (konnte) alle meine Probleme mit meinen Eltern besprechen
12 Ich kann alle meine Probleme mit meinen Freunden besprechen
13 Meine Eltern erlauben (erlaubten) mir zu wenig Freiheit
14 Meine Eltern geben (gaben) mir zu wenig Taschengeld

a = vollkommen einverstanden
b = im großen und ganzen einverstanden
c = es kommt darauf an
d = absolut nicht einverstanden

Follow-up work
With the help of your partner or the rest of the class, make up ten 'controversial statements' on any topic that interests you. Choose statements that are likely to provoke a variety of opinions. Conduct an opinion survey like those above.

Source: *Abgemacht*

Having tried our best to enable pupils to express their opinions, we also have to acknowledge that sometimes pupils' language skills will limit the depth of the discussion. We do not have to do everything ourselves, however. Again, liaise with other departments, for example:

- a poem, song, or video on unemployment can be used as a stimulus for extending language competence, and the ideas can then be followed up in greater depth in Drama or English lessons.

Such cross-curricular collaboration can help give a greater sense of reality both to the target language and to the other subject area.

The 'yes, but ...' question again. We don't want to limit pupils' horizons to their own experiences and lives. Is a possible starting point young people's views on issues in their own countries? The *European Guardian* often carries useful short features of teenagers' views.

There is clearly a need for more resources in this area.

Points for departmental discussion

- ☐ Identify from the scheme of work which tasks could be extended to have an equal opportunities dimension.
- ☐ Clarify the most simple forms of language to express the ideas.
- ☐ Discuss with colleagues in other departments what aspects of equal opportunities they cover. Could any of their material be simplified and translated into the target language?
- ☐ Start to collect information, even in English, on aspects of equal opportunities in the target language country.
- ☐ Buy books and magazines in the target language country relating to young people's interests, e.g. computer games, conservation, etc.

3. How we teach - managing classroom interaction and groupings

I'll just copy hers - as always goes it might why should I bother working?
Brilliant - a chance for a chat ...
I wonder if Lindy's going to the club on Saturday?
I'm not working with him ...
I hate this group work - no-one ever wants to work with me ...
Now today you're going to carry on working in groups - some of you can use the headphones and listen to the tapes, some of you can try to finish your posters, and some of you will be interviewing each other about your hobbies ...

The advent of the communicative approach and more recently of the move towards greater pupil autonomy has presented us with two problems in respect to classroom interaction. Both of them suggest that we need to pay greater attention than in the past to how pupils relate to the teacher and to each other in the classroom.

The first issue arises from the shift in emphasis away from accuracy in written work and towards oral fluency, with pupils encouraged not only to talk to the teacher in the target language but to each other. The National Curriculum report points out that: 'In language lessons, because talk is not just how you learn but also what you learn, it is particularly important to reflect on the patterns of classroom interaction and identify strategies that will give all pupils the security and the confidence to initiate and participate in speaking.' (14.8)

Such strategies may well involve tackling equal opportunities issues, if the following quotes from pupils are to be taken seriously:

> *At my last school I felt embarrassed speaking French in front of boys. Now I do better and show more interest because we are all girls.* (Burstall, 1974)

> *Teachers don't give you a chance even if you do decide to say something. They're too worried about the boys starting to play up so they don't let you say things properly. You don't get time so it all comes out wrong.* (Mahony, 1985)

> *We are not allowed to speak our own language at school. We can speak French though, because French is in the school's curriculum. I remember thinking when I was younger that maybe, somehow my language, the language of my parents wasn't a real language.* (*Time Out*, 1980)

We need then to make sure that one group of pupils does not dominate the rest of the class and that all pupils feel that who they are and what they have to say are valued. We cannot even start on the process of building up the confidence of some pupils, unless the overall classroom environment is a calm and positive one. Yet, as Susan Halliwell points out in her helpful book, *Yes - but will they behave?*, the question is 'how to organise language lessons so that they offer opportunities for real communication and lively interaction while still maintaining a reasonable working atmosphere for pupils and teachers alike'.

The importance of pupils feeling comfortable and secure in the classroom does not just relate to oral work, however. The second issue relating to classroom interaction arises from the concern to encourage them to take greater responsibility for their own learning. This means that they are often working in groups tackling reading, writing or listening activities together - well, at least that's what should be happening! In practice, managing thirty individuals with their own friendship patterns and personal prejudices can be far from easy. What do we do about the pupils who are either left out or who opt out - the bilingual pupil who is rejected and bullied, the pupils with special needs who give up, because other pupils constantly label them as 'thick'? What about the noisy group of boys who prevent the girls from getting on or who permanently claim the computer as their personal territory? How do we help boys to learn to help each other, when research (Askew and Ross, 1988) suggests that they are more competitive than girls and may find it harder to work collaboratively? And then what about the pupil who simply relies on the more diligent members of the group and copies their work?

Although there are no easy answers, the interactive languages classroom provides us with a new opportunity to develop pupils' social awareness and to tackle directly issues of race, class and gender. Instead of always accepting their choice of groupings, we can move towards a situation where they are learning to collaborate with everyone in the class and to overcome any racist or sexist assumptions they may have. Absorbed in working together on a common problem,

pupils often discover that the hostility they felt towards other members of the class disappears, as they become 'real people' rather than someone over the other side of the class to whom they never even talk.

This new focus on the quality of pupil interaction is reflected in the programmes of study. Amongst the six skill areas pupils should develop are *'the ability to work with others'* and *'the ability of learn independently'*. Like the other skill areas, however, this learning cannot be left to chance. We need to work out systematically how these new skills can be fostered and old attitudes and patterns of behaviour changed. But perhaps we may first need to look at our own behaviour patterns, and the messages we give out to the pupils we teach.

Possible strategies

In the hurly-burly of the classroom, we are often not aware of how we behave. The way we treat pupils, for example whom we reprimand or praise, may have become a habit. Research (Spender, 1982) suggests that teachers often discriminate according to race or gender. Because this is common to teachers of any subject, we include information on this area under 'Points for departmental discussion'. We also suggest there general strategies for monitoring pupil/pupil interaction and for raising their awareness of how they are treating each other.

The focus for the remainder of this chapter is specifically related to the new shape of the languages classroom.

'LIVELY INTERACTION' IN THE CLASSROOM

Most teachers have at some point in their career struggled with discipline problems. The increased importance attached to oral work has certainly not made the modern languages teacher's life any easier! Some of the problems can only be resolved in terms of working on the way we relate to pupils, at the moments when conflicts arise. We can, however, do much to minimise potential difficulties in advance by structuring our lessons to keep pupils mentally and physically involved throughout. Bearing in mind the particular class and the time of day, this may mean adopting a different balance between what Susan Halliwell terms 'stirring' and 'settling' activities. There is little point, for example, in trying to carry out half an hour of whole-class oral work with a bottom set on a Friday afternoon! The trick is to devise a lesson plan with short bursts of different types of oral work interspaced with more 'calming' activities.

MAKING THE MOST OF GROUP WORK

Starting up group work for the first time can be a daunting prospect. Not unnaturally, our initial focus tends to be deciding on the activities the pupils will be doing. It's generally easier, both for the teacher and for the pupils, if the

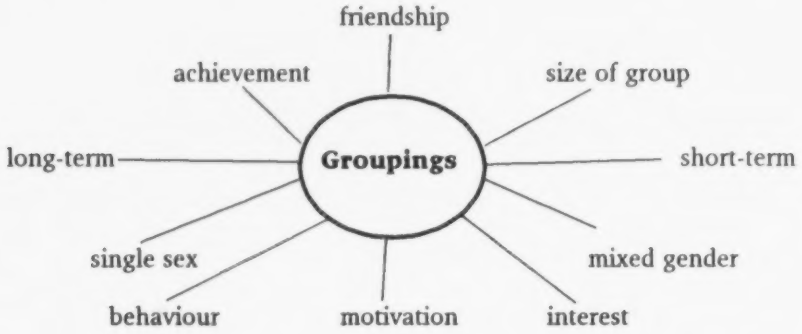
approach is introduced gradually. A first step, for example, may be to divide the class in two with one half undertaking a reading activity while the other half undertakes a writing activity (see *Letting go, taking hold: a guide to independent language learning by teachers for teachers, CILT, 1992*). It is important to consider, however, not only what you want them to be doing, but also how you want them to work together.

The following suggestions relate specifically to pupil interaction and are drawn from the experiences of a number of London teachers involved in a flexible learning project, run by Goldsmiths' College in collaboration with local LEAs.

The first question may well be:

HOW DO I DECIDE ON THE GROUPINGS?

The range of possibilities seems endless:



There are no easy answers in relation to groupings and it is often difficult to balance out the general educational arguments in favour of one particular grouping as against its opposite. A group of high attainers, for example, may proceed at a faster pace working together, but mixed ability groupings, if carefully set up, can allow low attainers to be supported by high attainers - who in turn will learn from making their own knowledge explicit. Some people might want to argue that on the grounds of equal opportunities, girls should work with boys, black pupils with white. Others argue equally convincingly and on the same grounds that all girl and all black groups allow pupils a sense of solidarity which helps establish their security and development. For this reason it seems sensible to adopt a flexible approach in relation to groupings, exploiting the advantages of each type and trying over the course of the year to ensure that pupils get to know and learn to collaborate with everyone.

That may well be our long-term aim, but are there ways of achieving it that do not 'plunge pupils (and ourselves) in at the deep end' and generate instant hostility?

Some teachers prefer to start by letting pupils work in friendship groups where they can support each other and build up their confidence with the new language teaching approach. It may mean recognising the value of a group of girls working together or a group of black pupils remaining in one group.

We need to move gradually and sensitively towards altering the groupings. Clearly much will depend on the relationship with the class and on the relationships between the pupils. Explain that although you recognise that they may well feel more secure working with a friend, this may not develop their ability to collaborate successfully with a range of other people. Some preliminary research (Frith and Harris, 1990) is encouraging in that it suggests that although pupils may prefer to work with their friends, they do recognise that they may learn better in mixed friendship groups. So it is worthwhile putting up with some initial complaints and asking them to think about how best they will make progress.

Be aware not only of the general educational issues but also of the particular language learning task in hand. Learning a language lends itself particularly well to a variety of different forms of grouping, each dependent on the specific nature of the task. So it is possible to ensure that by using a full range of tasks, over a period of time, pupils will all have the opportunity to work with each other. The following list indicates some of the possibilities:

- (a) Attainment groupings according to whether pupils need further practice through structured exercises or whether they are ready to move on to a more open-ended extension activity. Many teachers prefer to let pupils choose for themselves whether they want to try the easier or the harder task. Just be careful that unmotivated pupils do not take the soft option!

- (b) Mixed groupings for tackling a creative project, where the group may be made up of one pupil who is always prepared to 'have a go' at speaking, one who writes accurately, one artistic pupil, one sociable, etc. If the teacher decides on the composition of the groups, it is important to explain how that decision was made to enable everyone to contribute and the group as a whole to achieve a good result.

- (c) Interest groupings whereby pupils may have a free choice from a menu of tasks, grouping themselves according to whether they want to do a listening or a reading task, for example, or tackle one aspect of a topic rather than another.

- (d) Single sex groupings in speaking or IT tasks, to ensure that boys do not 'take up all the space'.

- (e) Gender/race groupings if an aspect of equal opportunities is to be taught as part of the topic covered (see Chapter 2). If, for example, pupils are discussing the number of white as opposed to black people in high status

jobs, black pupils may initially feel more able to express their opinions openly if grouped with pupils of the same race. Clearly, however, great sensitivity is needed by the teacher to handle such decisions successfully, so that pupils do not feel negatively identified as a 'problem' group in society or suddenly 'in the limelight' in a token gesture to equal opportunities.

It can be even more complicated to insist on mixed gender or race groupings and a great deal of preparatory groundwork in terms of discussions around equal opportunities will need to be done first. Even so, it may be important to ensure, for example, that there are more girls in the group than boys.

It seems then that the more pupils have a sense of control over the groupings (as in a and c, for example) or understand the language learning or the social reasons behind the new groupings, the more likely they are to accept them.

Other strategies to allow some sense of choice include a mixture of pupil choice and teacher criteria, for example:

- Teacher chooses group leader, group leader chooses friend, friend chooses someone of the opposite sex, who can then select a friend. This, however, does leave the problem of the pupils who are left at the end. One teacher attempts to resolve this by giving them the privilege of choosing which group to work with, but again this is a sensitive issue to handle and much depends on the relationship with the class.

- 'You can work with a friend, but then you must choose another pair of friends to work with that you haven't worked with before'.

Pupils will accept some loss of choice if the grouping is presented as a random outcome through language games. These also allow them to engage in some 'rapid-fire' oral work.

- Give pupils a number from one to four. Then all the 'ones' work together, all the 'twos' and so on.

- Tell pupils to use the target language to line themselves up according to their birthdays. Then group the Pisceans, Aries etc together.

- Give them cue cards around the topic being taught, so that they must find the four other people in the class who like the same school subjects/have a picture of the same fruit.

Whatever the form of grouping chosen, the next question must be:

HOW DO I HELP PUPILS TO WORK COLLABORATIVELY?

- When setting up group work for the first time, spell out the reasons for doing it both in terms of their linguistic and their social development.

- Explain why it is so important that they learn to work independently of the teacher - after all, you are not going to be there constantly at their side on a trip abroad and they have to learn to manage on their own resources.

- Explain why it matters to be able to work as a team, whether at home, at school or at work, and that through working as a team they will be able to appreciate each other as they really are and not attach labels according to some stereotype or instant judgement.

- Raise the status of social skills and make explicit exactly what is involved in working collaboratively. In some schools we used the following checklist and asked pupils to comment on the development of the group as a whole throughout the term.

At the **start** of the project read through these ideas:

After the project fill in the column to show where you have made progress:

✓✓ = I have done this a **lot**
✓ = I have done this a **bit**
✗ = I have **not** done this much

Social skills - working with others

I ask others to help me before asking the teacher	
I try to help other people without getting impatient	
I don't just give them the answers, I try to explain how I worked them out	
I don't just copy their answers, I ask them to explain	
I don't take up all the talking time, I listen carefully to what others say	
I try not to put other people down	
I understand that only one person should speak at a time	
I don't ever make offensive remarks	

- Time spent establishing group rules with the class is time well-spent and the ground rules can be signed like a contract. One teacher regularly asks her pupils, when she begins group work with the class, what they think will happen working like this. Pupils then identify for themselves that there will be a lot of noise and come up with the importance of the group working quietly. They can be reminded of their rules during subsequent lessons, as the noise level rises!

Our own rules

e.g.:

1. no bossing
2. give everyone their chance to speak
3. Help eachother
4. Work hard
5. Dont mess around and distract other people.
6. Give people a chance to express their ideas.
7. Work quietly
8. Aim to complete work
9. Wait for others to finish
10. Be in the lesson as much as possible

- Recognise and validate pupils' skills in group interaction through teacher comment in exercise books, reports and Records of Achievement.
- Remind pupils when any new grouping arrangements are formed of the importance of working collaboratively.

Points for departmental discussion

☐ A good starting point is to take a closer look at the existing patterns of interaction, not only between the pupils but also the messages we give out in the way we relate to them. Spender's research suggests, for example, that teachers give about two thirds of their attention, both positive and negative, to boys. So we may want to use an observation checklist to monitor our own patterns of interaction, like the distribution of questions or of praise around the class or how discipline problems are handled. The focus might be girls/boys, black/white pupils, high/low attainers or dominant/quiet pupils. The checklist can be completed by the teacher, a support teacher, or the FLA.

- [ ] Choose one particular class and establish the nature of the existing interaction between pupils, whether in groups or whole class work. Then decide what, if anything, you want to do about it and how best to approach it.

  - Do boys and girls, white and black pupils tend to sit separately in a mixed class?
  - Does this have any marked effect on the learning of individuals/the whole group?
  - Are self-selecting groups/pairs usually made up of the same gender or race?
  - What are the advantages and disadvantages, if they are?
  - Do all pupils make equal use of resources such as the video or the computer?

- [ ] Changing the patterns of interaction may well meet with resistance and the more pupils are involved in the process, the more likely it is to succeed. A first step may be to ask the pupils to act as observers, for example in how readily girls/boys contribute or how much disruption they cause. The results can be discussed by the whole class.

- [ ] Video the class and then discuss the interaction. This can be helpful in raising both the teacher's and the pupils' awareness.

- [ ] In discussions with pupils, any attempts to raise their awareness of equal opportunities are more likely to be successful if it is part of a whole school policy to tackle the problems. Where we can refer to the school's equal opportunities policy, or to work undertaken in PSE, English or Humanities lessons, our task will obviously be easier. We can learn much from the way colleagues from other subjects handle these sensitive issues.

- [ ] Discuss what types of pair/group work are already used in the department and how they could be extended.

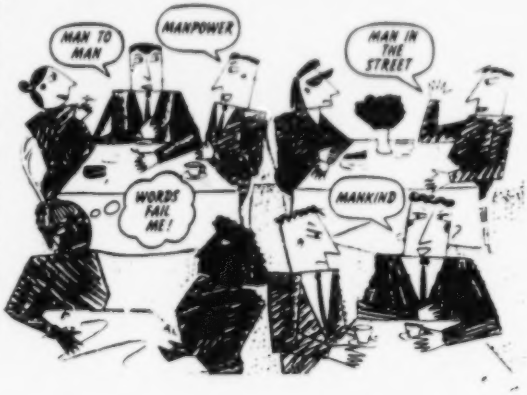
- [ ] Decide what type of grouping would be the most appropriate starting point for any particular class and how to build in alternative forms of grouping over the year.

- [ ] Review existing formal and informal assessment procedures to see if they acknowledge collaborative skills.

4. Exploring language

Under the National Curriculum, pupils in their English lessons are encouraged to become more aware of language in general, of the rich diversity of dialects and accents, of how we use different registers in different situations and of how the very language we use and hear can shape our consciousness and perceptions. This may involve them in looking at how, quite unconsciously, we may use language with racist or sexist connotations.

As language teachers, we have an excellent opportunity to complement the insights developed in English lessons. In Chapter 1, we explored the value of incorporating into our lessons resources illustrating different dialects and accents. The focus in this chapter is on the hidden messages that the words and the grammar of the language may convey. Often we are not aware ourselves of these messages. I used automatically to write up a paradigm with the masculine pronoun before the feminine one. So the first step to take may be to analyse the assumptions implicit in the target language and the way it is presented in dictionaries and grammar summaries. We may or may not then decide that it is important to do something about it in our language lessons.



Language and gender

★ What is the effect of the use of the masculine plural and the resulting adjectival agreements in sentences like *ils sont intelligents*, referring to a group of women, where there is only one man present? Does it make women 'invisible' or is it unimportant?

★ Why do instructions assume that the masculine form is appropriate for a class of mixed-sex pupils? - *demande à ton partenaire quels sports il préfère.*

★ Why do we use *l'homme* when perhaps what we mean is *l'être humain*?

★ Are there implicit messages in the fact that there are no female forms for certain high status jobs - *le député, le ministre, le secrétaire d'etat*? (It can be fun to ask pupils to translate 'the minister is pregnant'.)

★ Conversely, why do dictionaries give some jobs only in the feminine form? In Duden, for example, *Arzthelferin* appears only in the feminine form and in Robert, 'nurse' is given first in the feminine.

Language and race

★ What messages do expressions like *immigrés, brebis noir, schwarzer Markt, lo veo todo negro* convey?

Language and class

★ What are the connotations of words like *paysan* or *noble*, where personal characteristics are associated specifically with a certain section of society?

Language and disability

Is the word 'disability' less negative than *invalidité/incapacité*? What about the difference between 'wheelchair olympics' and *olympiques pour les handicapés*? Given that these are the words French people use, we may have to teach them but should we at least draw pupils' attention to their negative connotations?

Equally though, maybe we can learn something from other languages: *die Möglichkeiten nicht sehen* is very different from 'to be blind to the possibilities' and *ne pas voir ses défauts* from 'to be blind to his faults'.

Possible strategies

Some people argue that such questions are of trivial importance, especially compared to all the other forms of discrimination people suffer. The 'yes, but ...' argument here is that language is a powerful tool for shaping how we view the world, and even more powerful when we are not even aware of the hidden implications. From this perspective, the apparently minor features of language use feed into, reinforce and serve to legitimise other forms of discrimination. So what can we do if we agree with this argument?

Some areas are relatively easy to tackle, since they are under our control: the order in which we write up a paradigm on the board, for example, or the presentation of both the feminine and the masculine forms of jobs. In other areas, we may appear to have less say, but these are often the very areas that are most helpful for raising pupils' awareness and also for helping them remember a word or a rule.

- Set pupils an activity to look up words for jobs in a dictionary and note whether the masculine or the feminine form is given. Discuss the implications.

- Discuss invisibility through grammatical rules in simple terms: *il y a combien de filles/garçons? Pourquoi on doit dire 'ils'? C'est juste/sexiste?*

- Ask pupils to underline any sexist or racist use of language in any text they read. This may in itself provide a more purposeful sense to their reading than simply answering a battery of comprehension questions.

- Ask pupils to rewrite sets of instructions to take account of the probable presence of girls in the class. Apart from raising their awareness, and helping them to remember key words in the target language like 'ask/make up/tell', it is a useful grammatical exercise in itself requiring the manipulation of possessive adjectives and pronouns - *demande à ta/ton partenaire quels sports elle/il préfère.*

- Invite bilingual pupils to comment on whether similar problems occur in the structure or vocabulary of the other languages they know.

Points for departmental discussion

- ☐ Discuss with the English department the ways in which they seek to develop pupils' awareness of language. Further areas for collaboration are suggested in the following chapter.

- ☐ List the areas (grammatical points, topics such as jobs) where a discussion of the issues with pupils would be relevant.

- ☐ Discuss existing resources - are there texts where pupils could be made aware of the equal opportunities issues raised?

5. Getting the message across - the contribution of the languages department to equal opportunities in the school

The so-called 'languages' department - oh, it's no good asking them for help with our bilingual pupils. 'Languages' for them just means French and German...
We need one more person for the Equal Opportunities working party - I suppose there's no point in asking the languages department.
'A' level languages for a boy like Ricky? What a waste! I suppose he could become a teacher...
I don't think it's right for special needs pupils to have to do a language now. It's far too hard for them.
Parents' evening? Oh, I'm not sure where she comes from - she doesn't speak much English - I don't know why I have to have her in my Geography classes...

The previous chapters have focused on the individual teacher in her classroom - what she can do in her lessons to foster equal opportunities. There are a number of reasons, however, why we could look towards disseminating our ideas beyond the 'languages corridor'.

First, we have a special role to play in raising awareness of equal opportunities issues amongst staff, pupils and the local community. Most of us have developed a keen interest in different languages and cultures through our studies and periods of time spent abroad. So we are uniquely placed to raise the status of bilingual pupils, encouraging the school community to recognise and value the diversity in pupils' cultures and languages, and to build up links with local ethnic groups. We can also easily sympathise with the frustration of bilingual pupils who are labelled 'less able', simply because their level of English is not yet very advanced. How often,

after all, have we listened to fascinating discussions in Germany about the current political situation and just as we have managed to find the words to express our opinion, the conversation moves on, leaving us feeling stupid and dull? Furthermore, as teachers of language, we also have a wealth of expertise in how to make a new language readily comprehensible through mime, pictures, diagrams, gap-filling exercises and so on. How often do we share this knowledge with teachers of other subjects who are struggling to make their geography or science worksheet more accessible to bilingual pupils?

There are other messages we need to get across, this time in relation to recent changes in modern language teaching. Some colleagues may still associate us with the teachers who taught them and the traditional methods used then. How aware are we, in fact, of changes in the teaching of maths or science, or do we still conjure up images of what we endured when we were at school? These colleagues may find it hard to see that pupils with special needs really can benefit from being in our classes, imagining them as baffled and confused as they were in their schooldays. Other colleagues may not be aware of links between languages and the world of work and may feel that advanced studies in a language are a waste of time for the high attainer, with few career prospects in business and commerce.

For a variety of reasons then, colleagues outside the department may find it difficult to see the relevance of learning a language and what it can contribute to the general educational development of all pupils. Taking the broadest definition of equal opportunities, we need to show that our subject has something to offer everyone. Amidst all the pressures of our own teaching commitments, it is important to use issues of whole-school policy making as an opportunity for the department to make its voice heard, whether within discussions of TVE, IT or special needs. If we do not make explicit what we do and why, we may find ourselves excluded from some of the most interesting and informative debates going on within the school, and from some exciting possibilities for cross-curricular collaboration. So this chapter tries to pull together the ideas discussed so far and to suggest ways in which we can share our work with the school community.

The scheme of work

In order to begin the process of 'getting the message across', the languages department may want first to review its own aims and beliefs, in relation to some of the areas mentioned. This may involve examining its scheme of work. Schemes of work vary from school to school and it is clearly an almost impossible task to summarise all the possible ways in which we can contribute, but the following checklist indicates briefly the most obvious issues to be considered.

- ☐ The departmental aims and objectives - do they include the potential for contribution to the cross-curricular dimensions, skills and themes?
- ☐ The languages offered within the department - in what way do they recognise the languages of bilingual pupils?
- ☐ Setting, streaming, or mixed ability groups - does whichever way pupils are grouped ensure that all achieve their potential?
- ☐ The methodological approach - how does it try to cater for all pupils?
- ☐ The syllabus - does it recognise pupils' own interests and backgrounds? Are there topics designed for cross-curricular collaboration?
- ☐ The special needs and ESL policies - are the support staff invited to work collaboratively with the rest of the department?
- ☐ The distribution of resources - do all pupils have access to the IT facilities, the FLA etc?
- ☐ Assessment - how is assessment designed to value the achievements of all pupils and to encourage them to take some responsibility for their own learning?

If the list appears daunting, it may be because we simply have not yet made explicit to ourselves the links between what we already do anyway and its potential contribution to whole school issues. The following suggestions set out for each issue some examples of specific areas that could be considered.

Aims and objectives

Apart from the most obvious ones of 'a sympathetic approach to other cultures and civilisations' (National Curriculum Working Group report 3.2), include for example:

- ★ the concern to develop pupils' social skills through group work (Chapter 3);
- ★ the way we can contribute to other cross-curricular skills such as communication, problem-solving etc;

- any ways in which the department contributes to 'a heightened awareness of language generally' (8.14), including issues of accent, dialect and the languages of the bilingual pupils? Would collaboration with the English department be helpful? (Chapter 4)

Languages offered

Include for example:

- whether they are taught within the mainstream curriculum, or offered on 'taster' courses;
- whether bilingual pupils are at least encouraged to enter for GCSE exams, liaising with local community schools;
- whether a second language is offered to all or only to high attainers and what subjects it is set against.

Setting/streaming/mixed ability

This is a particularly complex issue but it might be helpful to discuss:

- the importance of differentiated resources in mixed ability teaching, but also conversely of activities and groupings which encourage collaboration (Chapter 3);
- the importance of regular reviews of the progress of each pupil in each set;
- the importance of a relevant programme of work for different sets. (The obvious danger here is to assume that it is simply the same work for low as for high attainers, but done at a slower pace.)

Methodological approach

Include perhaps:

- the range of skills which are valued, including the receptive skills, where low-attainers can often be successful;
- the way lessons are designed so that all pupils are actively involved and can contribute something;
- the policy regarding the use of the target language that benefits all pupils and most notably bilingual pupils, who don't have to contend with trying to understand the English explanations as well as the target language.

The syllabus

Apart from the obvious tasks where pupils describe their home, family and hobbies, include for example:

★ tasks that encourage pupils to express their opinions (Chapter 2);

★ negotiation that allows pupils to discuss what they want to learn.

SEN and ESL policy

Beware of seeing these pupils as the sole responsibility of the support teachers. More can be achieved if the regular class teacher works in collaboration with support teachers, recognising that making the curriculum more accessible to these pupils often also makes it easier and more enjoyable for the rest of the class.

Resources

The understandable temptation here is to reserve the FLA, for example, for top or GCSE groups, or to allow boys to monopolise the IT resources. In either case, we are giving out messages about who is important.

Include here also resources that reflect the diversity of pupils' backgrounds (Chapter 1), the choice of textbook etc.

Assessment

Include:

★ the range of skills recognised - not only the four language skills but also social skills (problem-solving, creativity, etc). There are obvious links here to cross-curricular developments.

★ any forms of self-assessment or peer assessment as well as teacher assessment.

Possible strategies

RAISING AWARENESS

Having identified in what ways learning a language can contribute to whole school concerns, the next step is for the department to examine how it can most readily show to 'outsiders' what it is doing and indeed help them to become more aware of their own preconceptions.

- Make the most of displays both within and beyond the languages corridor. They can include:

  - ★ pupils' own work, paying particular attention to include low attainers' work, using perhaps IT to enhance its appearance;
  - ★ authentic materials tackling racism or sexism or environmental issues;
  - ★ photos of pupils working collaboratively in groups with captions describing the activities;
  - ★ photos of the school exchange or trip abroad - if possible, also include work done by pupils who could not go on the trip (for example looking at the prices of goods in English as compared to German supermarkets);
  - ★ notices on the careers board advertising jobs requiring Panjabi or Spanish speakers;
  - ★ notices and signs around the school in the most common languages;
  - ★ displays of greeting cards in a variety of languages along with the dates of religious festivals in different cultures.

- Assemblies, parents' evenings, open days and school magazines can similarly reflect that modern language teaching is concerned with the full range of potential, skills and languages.

- ★ Assemblies in the target language provide a real audience and a real purpose for preparatory language learning activities. Low attainers linguistically can often 'gain the limelight' in terms of their acting skills.

- ★ Assemblies can include songs, dances and poems from other cultures, and slide shows from teachers or pupils who have visited or whose parents come from another country. They can help raise the status of bilingual pupils in monolingual pupils' and their teachers' eyes.

- ★ Invite all pupils (and not just high attainers) to contribute to sample 'taster' lessons at open evenings and make sure that setting up a typical *café* at a school *fête* is open to all cultures and not just French and German.

- Cross-phase events such as liaison with primary and middle schools also provide an excellent opportunity for 'putting the message across'.

- Have another look at the library. Are there bilingual readers, books by Afro-Caribbean and Asian writers and artists, or poetry books (such as Gallimard's *Adolescence en poésie*) which express in simple language some of the concerns of teenagers growing up in an inner-city environment?

CROSS-CURRICULAR COLLABORATION

Chapter 8 of the National Curriculum Working Group report sets out a range of ways in which cross-curricular collaboration can enhance pupils' understanding of a topic, make it seem more relevant and improve their linguistic skills. In addition to the obvious benefits to pupils, however, it is worth looking at the messages such work gives colleagues - that modern language teaching has changed and is changing to make a positive and practical contribution to pupils' general development. Here are some further ideas, in addition to those suggested in previous chapters.

- Use link schools to provide opportunities for cross-curricular work, where pupils look not only at the history and geography of the local area but also the employment situation, the transport facilities, and the local ethnic communities.

- Satellite TV provides a range of useful resources from programmes on pollution to advertisements.

- Language awareness programmes can often best be developed in collaboration with the English department, dealing with issues of accent and dialect, register, and racism and sexism in language. The following programme, developed at a local London school, was as valuable for the staff as for the pupils.

TABLE 1 Varieties of Language

English	Languages
Language variation – an introduction	Views about language
	Discovering languages
Development of baby language	Major world languages
Different ways of talking:	Languages of the UK
(a) accent	Languages of Greenwich and John Roan
(b) accent prejudices	
(c) dialect	
(d) slang	Focus on the Indian subcontinent:
(e) playing with words	(a) location
(f) inventing a language	(b) five major languages
(g) language and gender	(c) scripts
	(d) cultural background
	(e) Punjabi taster
	The value of being bilingual

(from Chapter 10, *Language awareness in the classroom*, edited by Carl James and Peter Garrett)

Cross-curricular opportunities can also be provided at a very simple, practical level where, for example:

- pupils in music lessons work out raps in the target language;
- the regular modern language teacher works with a specialist colleague to conduct a cookery or science lesson in the target language;
- pupils in their art lesson prepare the scenery and props for a market scene.

Points for departmental discussion

- ☐ How are languages viewed within your school?
- ☐ To what extent are those views justified?
- ☐ What particular misconception could most readily be challenged and how (displays, presence of a modern languages representative on a Working Party, cross-curricular lessons)?
- ☐ In what ways can the languages department most readily raise awareness of equal opportunities amongst the rest of the staff?

6. The final 'yes, but...'

We may have made a commitment to developing equal opportunities but how feasible is it to plan lessons so that they are jam-packed with the suggestions we have made? It is not only impractical, given all the pressures we are under, it is not even desirable. It may indeed be counter-productive, leaving pupils feeling bored and resentful. Nor should we decide that in today's lesson, we will 'do' equal opportunities. A more constructive way forward is to try routinely to build into our lessons different ways of looking at the world. In this way, we may not only open pupils' eyes, but probably also our own.

A selection of useful reading

Askew S and C Ross, *Boys don't cry* (Oxford University Press, 1988).

Burstall C, M Jamieson, S Cohen, and M Hargreaves, *Primary French in the balance*, (NFER, 1974).

Frith, A and Harris, V 'Group work in the modern languages classroom', *Language Learning Journal*, March 1990.

Gathercole, I (ed.) *Autonomy in language learning*, CILT, 1990.

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Holmes, B *Communication re-activated: teaching pupils with learning difficulties*, CILT, 1991.

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Little, D, Devitt, S and Singleton, D *Learning foreign languages from authentic texts: theory and practice*, CILT and Authentik, 1989.

Mahony, P *Schools for the boys? Co-education reassessed*, Hutchinson, 1985.

Moys, A and Townsend, R *Making the case for languages*, CILT, 1991.

Page, B *Letting go, taking hold: a guide to independent language learning by teachers for teachers*, CILT, 1992.

Spender, D *Invisible women: the schooling scandal*, Writers and Readers, 1982.

Thorogood, J *Continuous assessment and recording*, CILT, 1992.

Adolescence en poésie, Editions Gallimard.

'Keep putting gender on the agenda', *TALK*: the Journal of the National Oracy Project, no. 4, summer 1991.

National Curriculum Working Group report *Modern foreign languages for ages 11 to 16*, October, 1990.

ILEA Language Centre *Equal opportunities: guidelines for teachers of languages.*

ILEA *Copyart*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991.

Pathfinder

At the heart of the debate on equal opportunities lies the concern of how we can build an education system which is 'fair enough' for all pupils.

The purpose of this book is to open up for discussion some of the complex and sensitive issues raised. In doing so, the author offers modern language teachers practical strategies for ways in which they can encourage and foster equal opportunities in their languages classrooms. The book also gives suggestions for departmental discussion and cross-curricular collaboration.

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